2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

the women has constantly to handle it and if, just after intercourse, she has to do this without time to wash first, then the child, we think, will get diarrhœa or grow thin. Women[1] always wash very carefully in the mornings after intercourse, both for the sake of the children and the husband. If the woman touches food unwashed after intercourse we think it will make her husband sick, and he will get unhealthily fat. If a child is old enough to play by itself . . . so that the wife can wash properly before attending to it, then it is all right for the couple to have intercourse, but not for the woman to become pregnant again yet. She should not do that until the child is weaned![2]

Contact with menstrual blood or a menstruating woman is held to be dangerous to a man, more particularly to a warrior, hence there is an absolute taboo on intercourse during menstruation (for five to eight days) and restrictions on cooking for a man. A menstruating woman does not blow up the fire on which her husband's food is cooking, or squeeze the food to test whether it is ready, or scrape ash off bananas or sweet potatoes she has roasted, or serve food, for 'her breath comes from her belly and it is dirty; her belly is dirty on account of the menstrual blood. All her body is dirty. She does not wash. When she washes, you, the husband, think that the flow has dried up and catch hold of her!' So a woman who is menstruating fans the fire instead of blowing it, and calls a co-wife or a child to serve the food she has cooked. She does not even crouch over the fire to warm herself, lest she contaminate it; and she neither uses the common calabash cup for drinking nor scoops water from the household water jar with her hand, but fashions a cup for herself from a leaf, or has her own little water-pot. She avoids passing behind or shaking hands with a man; she avoids a new-born infant; she keeps well away from cattle, neither passing behind them when they are in the homestead nor clearing out dung from the byre; she avoids touching medicines or entering the house of a doctor; and she avoids eating pumpkin or pumpkin leaves, or picking them. These taboos are enforced lest she injure men or infants or cattle or medicines, for 'she is dirty' and her 'dirt' is thought to cause purging and to rot medicines, and she,

[1] The 'filth' is on the wife because she cleanses her husband with her hands.

[2] *Coitus interruptus* is practised until the mother is ready to conceive again. 'Formerly it was taboo to make a woman pregnant before her previous child was four or five years old. Her husband's sisters made a great case about it. The child must know how to run before a younger brother was born. We said: "How can a woman carry two children?" Now she becomes pregnant again when the elder is two. Of those who bear again before that it is said: "They kill the elder child." ' (Statement of Nsajigwa, an elderly man.)

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

CHAPTER II

Village Life

361 THE typical Konde village has very little in common with a European one. Here and there one will come on villages neatly laid out in streets or rows, usually with the ends, rather than the sides, facing the road; frequently with a clump of bananas separating one house from another. But much more common is the village in which each house is hidden in its own banana grove; or where at one point one may find three or four huts grouped together, at another perhaps a solitary hut, yonder, again, two or three are near each other; but everywhere surrounded by bananas growing close up to the houses. Or, in a few places, the tall maize conceals the houses from view in the growing season, leaving them exposed, after the harvest, to the eye of all passers-by.

512 From a distance nothing is seen but the wide spreading banana leaves. In the early morning from hundreds of huts smoke rises into the still air, as the sleepers rouse themselves and lay fresh wood on the fire which has been smouldering all night, unless some one has wakened and stirred the dying embers. One by one the villagers emerge from the houses, and

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

One by one the villagers emerge from the houses, and sit in the sun, greeting neighbours with a polite "Have you slept well?" if there are any neighbours near. Then the husband milks the cattle, and the boys come to drive them out to the pasture, where they will remain until the early afternoon, when they are again milked.

Generally the cattle sleep in the same house as their owners, tied up to stakes fixed deep in the floor; but where there are grown-up sons not yet married, a separate house is built in which the parents sleep with the little ones, while the young men guard the cattle from raiding thieves.

The bed is frequently no more than a mat spread on the mud floor, with a single blanket for covering, and no pillow, unless it is a piece of roughly trimmed wood. The more prosperous natives, earning good pay in the employment of Europeans, have well-made beds fully equipped, in many cases even with mosquito nets hung from the roof. The poorer consider that they have made a great step forward if they have been able to save up enough money to buy a single blanket, and not seldom even that belongs to the father, the mother and children having to be content with meagre coverings of calico or grass mats. But the house is warm, often too warm, for the fire is always burning, the door is closed, there are no windows, and there is no ventilation in the roof; and all the inmates sleep with their feet to the fire, which is in the middle of the floor.

Here and there one will come upon rows of tiny houses, each built and occupied by two or three small

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

461 521 522 marriage settlement; the wealth some one has brought from the South; or perhaps they exchange impressions of Europeans they have worked for—a subject into which a great deal of humour can be packed; for it must not be imagined that the white man is taken too seriously. His little foibles, his often none too good temper, his haste to get a job done, and above all his cool assumption of unquestioned superiority, supply endless fun to the village joker. "Bantu as she is spoke" by some Europeans gladdens the weary hours for many a humorously inclined native.

241 512 Should the rains be late, the situation may be serious, for not only does the heat continue, but the harvest will be correspondingly late, and there is dark fear lest the supplies in the barns, intended to last until March, should have to do until April is well on. [783] Public prayer is offered, led by the chief. The preliminary ceremonies have been attended to, and as soon as the first rains fall all sally out with the first streak of dawn to begin the year's work. From a score of small crofts one may hear the long happy shout of the men, and the shrill call of the women, as they toil in the early morning; but as the day advances and the heat increases, the shouting dies away, and every one puts the last ounce of energy into the task in hand. Henceforward, for about three months, the native gives all his attention to his crops; for as the season advances, and the grain begins to grow, the weeds come up also in wild profusion, and

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

241 sheer hard work makes men and women look thin and
512 haggard. Work stops about noon; the women go home to attend to the food, the men to see to the cattle which the smaller boys have been looking after
231 during the day. The milking is always done by the
512 men; it is not women's work as with us. If there are
[462] flies about, and there usually are, the cows need no invitation to thrust their heads into the column of acrid smoke that arises from a dung fire, kindled for the purpose. The rest of the afternoon is filled either with small duties, basket mending, net work, some slight repairs to a canoe, rope making, house repairing; or it may be there is a lawsuit to be settled, and every idler will make a point of being present.

512 By the time food is over, night has closed in. If
[576] the night is dark, one after another slips away with a friendly "May you sleep well," and silence reigns until morning. Unless it is suddenly broken by the roar of a lion or the growl of a leopard; and then the young men, who sleep with the cattle, rush out with spears and clubs and wild shouting to drive off the intruder, while the others raise a weird cry within the houses. Should the lion take refuge in a thicket and refuse to be driven off, a small party may slip round to the nearest white man, if he is not too far away, to beg him either to lend them a rifle, or to
512 come himself to their aid. In the warm moonlight
535 nights, however, other noises fill the ear. The young people gather for a dance, and the drum fills the night air with its interminable tum tum tum, now soft and

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

512 low, again rising to a perfect fury of rapid sounds,
535 not without a certain rhythm, but with rasping effect upon the nerves of Europeans tossing sleeplessly in the warm humid air.

[221] After harvest comes the house-building; and when
484 that is finished the men are free to go out to seek
464 work. They usually set out in companies, for the Konde dislikes being alone on a journey. Like all
[609] home-loving people, they are suspicious of strangers, and if they have to pass through another tribe, they take great care to guard their small possessions; seldom more than they are wearing, and a spear or a club to guard them from the more obvious dangers of the way. There will be a few youths going out for the first time, with a wild flutter at the heart, of fear and expectancy. Fear, for they have heard strange tales of the white men and their ways; expectancy, because of the wonderful things they will see: the great houses, steamers, trains, motors; and what must seem countless white men to those who have been accustomed only to the missionary, the magistrate, and the storekeeper, and even these perhaps some days' journey from home. And who knows but he will come back with money in his pocket, wearing gorgeous raiment, a helmet perhaps, and, above all other things to be desired, a pair of boots! Those who stay long
[431] come back with the spoils of civilisation; highly coloured cloths, cheap clocks, melodeons, mouth-organs, worthless pocket-knives, which they deal out to admiring friends and acquaintances.

8: Wilson E-5 (1934-1936)1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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583 Normally a bachelor is given cows one by one, over a period of years, and, as we have seen, he sends them, as he receives them, to the father of the girl he wants to marry. One cow is sufficient for betrothal, but not until he has given three can he begin openly to sleep with her. And he cannot usually set up his own economy until he has given at least three cows and she has reached puberty and been initiated. He may of course bespeak an already grown girl, but if he engages himself to a young one he is expected to bring two or more bulls as well, during the course of her initiation.

684 If he chooses to spend his cows in adultery fines, he may, but he will then have to wait longer to get married.

582 561 Thus the system of marriage by a transfer of cattle is, in this society, directly linked with a late marriage age for young men and with a privileged position for older men. When a boy gets cattle he at once gives them to an older man in order to secure his daughter as a wife; the labour of every bachelor helps to increase his father's wealth in food; it is in general the older men alone who can afford more than one wife. And there is an average difference of ten years or more in the initial marriage age of men and girls. [162] The tax registers show in part of the district, among 3,000 adult* men, 34% bachelors, 37% monogamists, and 29% polygynists; and investigation proves that, generally speaking, it is the young men who are bachelors, the men over forty-five who are polygynists.

511 574 Though cattle are their most valued form of wealth, it is on agriculture that the economy of the Nyakyusa is primarily based. Meat and milk are luxuries, and daily bread comes from the fields. Hard work in a fertile country provides food for each family, and the millet beer which is the ordinary material of hospitality. Hospitality brings a man prestige and authority among his fellows; on the possession of sufficient food largely depends the contentment of his wives. And in the production, preparation and eating of food the relationships of the family and of the individual family within it, are clearly visible.

241 ● 512 Hoeing is the work of men, planting, weeding, reaping and cooking is the work of women. The men, young and old, hoe for about four hours on most mornings of the year; in the lower altitudes they begin well before sunrise and finish about 9 a.m., on the upland plateau they begin later and continue till noon or beyond. The energetic ones sometimes hoe again for an hour or two in the late afternoon. Different

*Presumed to be 18 years or over.

8:Wilson E-5 (1934-1936)1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

crops are planted at different seasons of the year so that there is always some hoeing to be done.

In a polygynous family each wife has her own fields (*embaka*), hoed by her husband and her own sons, which she plants, weeds and reaps with the help of her own daughters, and the produce of which she uses to cook for her husband, her own children and herself. The relative rights of husband and wife to dispose of produce vary with different crops, but no co-wife has any rights over a woman's food. She may, and often does, ask her co-wives to help in her fields and sends them presents of cooked food from her own fire, she may help them and receive presents in return; but they have no rights over her fields or her food, only her husband and herself. And the fields which are hoed by a bachelor son belong to his own mother, who in her turn cooks food for him to eat.

Each wife has either a hut to herself, or else a separate alcove in a large hut, and there she has her fire for cooking. She fetches her own firewood and water or sends an unmarried daughter for them.

At meals the ages and the sexes eat separately; in some polygynous families each wife sends a dish to the husband, in others the wives take it in turns to cook for him. The husband eats alone or with neighbours of his own age[7] to share his dish, the older boys and their friends[7] eat separately from the younger children, and each mother again usually eats with her own daughters, apart.

In the relationship of husband and wife the chief elements are sexual intercourse, co-operation in work, the procreation of children and factors of personal inclination, character and temperament. By men women are praised for sexual skill, cleanliness and beauty, for good cooking and hard work, for their fecundity, and for gentleness of speech and behaviour, and those with opposite qualities are criticized. Among women men are praised for sexual skill and attentiveness, for vigour in hoeing and skill in house-building, and for kindness; while sexual neglect, laziness, impotence and cruelty are disliked and may cause a woman to leave her husband for another man.

The birth of children is a most important factor in the marriage relationship, for children are greatly desired both by men and women. They are desired for themselves and also because they bring their parents wealth and prestige; a boy will one day work in the fields of his father and mother, a girl will bring in cattle from her marriage. And the possession of children brings compliments and respect both to man and woman.

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[7] Vide infra "*The Age-Village.*"
[Cat. 116, pp. 269 ff. --Analyst]

14: Lehmann E-5 (1939)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

[P. 138]

Notes on the daily life of the Nyakyusa (Tanganyika Territory)

Cf. Sociologus 1951, I, 1 S. 53 ff.

By F. Rudolf Lehmann

192
576 *1. Greetings.* The first thing to strike a visitor to the Nyakyusa country north of Lake Nyasa on passing through one of the numerous picturesque villages surrounded by banana groves is the way of greeting customary among these people. *"Ukuponya"* is the Nyakyusa word for "to greet". In the morning you are greeted with the exclamation: *"ugonile* (pl. *mugonile)"*, which literally means: "Did you sleep well?" And you may answer in the same way, or, in fuller form as you can hear it from the mouth of the natives: *"ae'e ndaga, ugonile"*, or *"ugonile yoyoque"*. *"ae'e ndaga"* may be used with all answers, meaning: thanks! At noon or in the afternoon you will hear: *"uvombide"*, you have worked, or, have you worked? Then, according to the case, you may answer: *"muvombide avanda"*, you, men, have worked, or, generally: *"mwangere"*, which is equivalent to the Swahili: *"habari gani?"*. If you greet a person in the evening with the words: *"ugonege"*, may you sleep well, the person thus addressed will answer: *"kagone!"*.

234
[312] *2. Milking.* The first task in the daily life of the Nyakyusa people is for the men to milk the cows. This is done in the morning before the cattle are driven out to graze and again in the evening when they return. But the cattle are also driven back to the village at noon when
[237
232] they are usually fumigated standing in the smoke of a fire for which cow dung and banana leaves are used, a process designed to remove vermin from the skin of the cattle. The animals seem to be very fond of this procedure. They stand quietly in the smoke gazing at the passers-by.

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[462] *3. Hoeing.* "Hoeing is the work of men, planting weeding, reaping is the work of women. The men, young and old, hoe for about four hours on most mornings of the year; in the lower altitudes they begin well before sunrise and finish about 9 a. m., on the upland plateau they